



# BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



A PLUG AND PLAY  
ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH



**FACILITATOR GUIDE**

May 2023

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# Overview

This module will provide youth with information on identifying healthy and unhealthy characteristics of relationships and cultivating healthy relationships of all types: friends, romantic partners, family, classmates, teachers, coworkers, and others. Youth will learn to evaluate their own relationships and identify ways to improve their own behaviors in relationships. They will also learn how to leave an unhealthy relationship and how to locate appropriate resources if they are in an unhealthy relationship.



## KEY TOPICS

Healthy vs. unhealthy relationships



## AUDIENCE

Middle and high school youth



## LENGTH

70 minutes



## GOALS

- Youth will be able to recognize signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Youth will be able to recognize early warning signs that a relationship may become unhealthy.
- Youth will improve their own behaviors when it comes to their relationships with others.
- Youth will be motivated to leave unhealthy relationships and will gain the confidence and skills necessary to do so.
- Youth will become aware of resources available to them if they find it difficult to leave an unhealthy relationship.



## KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUTH

- Qualities like trust, respect, independence, and honest communication make for the healthiest relationships.
- Relationships require work and maintenance to succeed.
- Just because a relationship contains an unhealthy trait doesn't mean the entire relationship is unhealthy. Even healthy relationships may contain moments of jealousy, dishonesty, or miscommunication. But if both people are willing to resolve issues as they arise, the relationship can be strengthened.
- It is best to let go of a relationship if your boundaries are often crossed or if it's causing you physical, emotional, or mental harm.

# Before You Start

To get ready for this classroom activity, review this checklist and gather all the materials and technology you will need. Some activities will require advance preparation. Read the Facilitator Guide to familiarize yourself with each section.

Resource	How to Prepare	Where You Will Use this Resource
 Laptop or tablet device		Entire Lesson
 Projector or shared screen using videoconferencing platform such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Blackboard		Entire Lesson
 Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)		Entire Lesson
 <p>Background reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Characteristics of Healthy &amp; Unhealthy Relationships   Youth.gov</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Healthy Relationships: Assess, Improve, Take action.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Healthy Relationships</a></li> </ul>	Read these optional resources for facilitator preparation.	Entire Lesson
 Chalkboard or whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of brainstorming activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Slides, Zoom's whiteboard feature)		Section 1
 <b>Healthy Relationships Challenge Video</b>	Download the resource and have it open and ready to present from your laptop, tablet, or other device.	Section 1

## OVERVIEW

Resource	How to Prepare	Where You Will Use this Resource
 <p>Optional brainstorming method: <a href="#">Poll Everywhere free basic account</a></p>	<p>Poll Everywhere can be used to engage students in brainstorming activities. Poll Everywhere shows results in real time, which increases student engagement.</p> <p>Sign up for a free Poll Everywhere account prior to the class discussion. The free version allows for creating a question and having participants type in responses in real time via the web or via SMS text messages. If you choose to use Poll Everywhere for brainstorming, read the instructions to learn how to set up a poll first. Choose the poll type called “open-ended question.”</p>	<p>Section 1, Part 1 Section 2, Part 2</p>
 <p><b>Relationship Challenges - Scenarios for Class Discussion</b></p>	<p>Download the resource to discuss the three scenarios depicting relationship challenges if students do not provide sufficiently appropriate scenarios in Section 2, Part 1.</p>	<p>Section 2, Part 2</p>
 <p><b>Contact Information Flyer for love is respect</b></p>	<p>Share with students electronically or print and share the flyer.</p>	<p>Section 2</p>

# SECTION 1

## Toxic or Not? Features of Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships



### OBJECTIVES

- Youth will identify aspects of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Youth will categorize relationship behaviors in scenarios as healthy or unhealthy.



### KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Respect/disrespect, honesty/dishonesty, trust/lack of trust, communication, independence/dependence, jealousy, patience, support, manipulation, isolation, control, gaslighting



### MATERIALS

**Healthy Relationships Challenge Video**



### TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

- Laptop or tablet device
- Projector or shared screen using videoconferencing platform such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Blackboard
- Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)
- Chalkboard or whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of brainstorming activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Slides, Zoom's whiteboard feature)
- Poll Everywhere free account (optional)

# PART 1 | Key Components of Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships (15 minutes)

Brainstorming and Class Discussion

## 1. Guide students in identifying components of healthy and unhealthy relationships.



**ASK:** What words, phrases, or behaviors come to mind when you think about what a healthy relationship looks like? Think about all kinds of relationships such as relationships between friends or between family members or romantic relationships.

Have students brainstorm for **2 minutes** about the components of a healthy relationship. Encourage students to say whatever comes to mind to prompt as many ideas as possible. Record students' ideas on a whiteboard, flip chart, or virtual whiteboard or use Poll Everywhere to gather ideas. Repeat ideas as needed for clarification. If using a virtual whiteboard, use the "annotate" feature to allow students to write their ideas. Record exact words and phrases provided and allow repetition; mark repetitions with a checkmark or star to note ideas generated by multiple participants.



### FACILITATOR TIP

Use Poll Everywhere as an optional method to ask students to brainstorm the words, phrases, or behaviors that come to mind when they think about what a healthy relationship and an unhealthy relationship look like.

See Before You Start on page 2 for instructions.



**SAY:** Let's summarize all the things you thought of that have to do with healthy relationships.

Repeat each word or phrase generated by the students.



### FACILITATOR TIP

If students haven't suggested the following phrases, bring them up and add them to the list generated by the class:

- Respect
- Trust
- Honest communication
- Understanding
- Independence
- Healthy boundaries
- Patience
- Support



**ASK:** What words, phrases, or behaviors come to mind when you think about what an unhealthy relationship looks like?

Have students brainstorm for 2 minutes about the components of an unhealthy relationship.



**SAY:** Let's summarize all the things you thought of that have to do with unhealthy relationships.

Repeat each word or phrase generated by the students.



### FACILITATOR TIP

If students haven't suggested the following phrases, bring them up and add them to the list generated by the class:

- Disrespect
- Dishonesty
- Lack of communication
- Lack of trust
- Dependence
- Fighting/violence
- Manipulation
- Jealousy
- Isolation
- Controlling behavior
- Gaslighting



# PART 2 | Healthy Relationships Challenge (15 minutes)

## Assessment Activity

### 1. Introduce assessment activity.



**SAY:** Now we're going to see if you can figure out whether some relationship behaviors are healthy or not. I will play some short video clips. After each clip we will talk about what is healthy or not healthy in each scenario.



**SAY:** This first scenario is called "Saturday Plans." Emily is watching a movie with friends and gets a text from Taylor. You need to decide if this relationship is healthy or not healthy.

Play the first scenario, "Saturday Plans," in the **Healthy Relationships Challenge Video**.



**ASK:** What do you think? Is this a healthy relationship or not? Why?



### FACILITATOR TIP

Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following observations, if needed:

**This relationship is not healthy.** Taylor is limiting Emily's interactions with her friends, pressuring her into spending more time together. It might make you feel special to hear that your partner wants all of your time. That's why it can be hard to notice a form of control called **isolation**, which happens when your partner says or does things to keep you from your family or friends.

Maybe your partner comes up with reasons for why you should spend more time with them and less time with others. Or maybe they say negative things about your family and friends to change how you view them. Either way, these behaviors could distance you from people you trust and make you completely dependent on your partner.

In a healthy relationship, both partners give each other freedom and encouragement to spend time with others.

PART 2 | Healthy Relationships Challenge



**SAY:** The second scenario is called “Instagram Likes.” Gavin is scrolling through his girlfriend Rachel’s Instagram page. He notices that a guy from their school—Trevor—has liked every picture Rachel has posted. Watch Gavin’s reaction and decide if this relationship is healthy or not healthy.

Play the second scenario, “Instagram Likes,” in the **Healthy Relationships Challenge Video**.



**ASK:** What do you think? Is this a healthy relationship or not? Why?



**FACILITATOR TIP**

Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following observations, if needed:

**This relationship is not healthy.** Gavin is showing **jealousy**; not only is he closely monitoring Rachel’s Instagram, but he is upset at Rachel over someone else’s actions. It’s natural for people to feel jealous sometimes if they worry their partner is losing interest in them or becoming more interested in someone else. However, jealous feelings can become a problem when people act on them.

Someone who is jealous might become overly suspicious and watch their partner’s every move, or they might accuse their partner of cheating. Jealous feelings can even lead to abusive behaviors.

Although you might feel flattered by your partner’s jealousy at first, look out for signs that it has crossed into unhealthy territory—like a lack of trust or isolating you from your friends or, in extreme cases, verbal or physical abuse.



**SAY:** The third scenario is called “Phone Buzzing Off the Table.” Deon just finished his homework. He gets some texts from Kayla. You need to decide if this relationship is healthy or not healthy.

Play the third scenario, “Phone Buzzing Off the Table,” in the **Healthy Relationships Challenge Video**.



**ASK:** What do you think? Is this a healthy relationship or not? Why?



**FACILITATOR TIP**

Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following observations, if needed:

**This relationship is healthy.** Deon is honest about his boundaries and the time he needs with other people. Once Deon talks with her about it, Kayla is understanding, recognizes what she could have done differently, and apologizes.

In a healthy relationship, both partners communicate their expectations and **respect each other's boundaries**. Everyone has their own style when it comes to communication, and everyone has other responsibilities and friendships beyond dating. No one should feel guilty about not immediately responding to a text message or about turning their phone off.



**SAY:** The fourth scenario is called "A New Girl at School." Two friends (Megan and Daniela) are texting each other. You need to decide if this relationship is healthy or not healthy.

Play the fourth scenario, "A New Girl at School," in the **Healthy Relationships Challenge Video**.



**ASK:** What do you think? Is this a healthy relationship or not? Why?



**FACILITATOR TIP**

Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following observations, if needed:

**This relationship is healthy.** Megan is being honest with Daniela, and Daniela is listening to what Megan has to say. They are both understanding and accepting of what the other is saying.

In healthy friendships, friends have **honest communication**. They talk about how they're feeling and hear each other out to reach a good solution.

PART 2 | Healthy Relationships Challenge



**SAY:** The fifth scenario is called “What’s Yours is Mine.” Luis and Olivia are texting about something that happened earlier in the day. You need to decide if this relationship is healthy or not healthy.

Play the fifth scenario, “What’s Yours is Mine,” in the **Healthy Relationships Challenge Video**.



**ASK:** What do you think? Is this a healthy relationship or not? Why?



**FACILITATOR TIP**

Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following observations, if needed:

**This relationship is not healthy.** Olivia is showing a **lack of trust** and is not respecting boundaries. No one should demand to read someone else’s text messages, read them without their permission, or demand their password.

In a healthy relationship, both partners trust each other’s interactions with others.



**SAY:** The sixth scenario is called “What’s So Funny?” Imani was hanging out with friends and is walking home. She texts her friend Elijah about something that is bothering her. You need to decide if this relationship is healthy or not healthy.

Play the sixth scenario, “What’s So Funny?” in the **Healthy Relationships Challenge Video**.



**ASK:** What do you think? Is this a healthy relationship or not? Why?



### FACILITATOR TIP

Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following observations, if needed:

**This relationship is not healthy.** Elijah is trying to convince Imani her feelings aren't valid and that she isn't remembering things correctly. These are examples of **gaslighting**, which is a type of abuse that involves manipulating the victim into doubting their reality. Gaslighting can also involve saying things to make another person feel like they're being too sensitive or that they're "crazy." A person who is gaslighting may say that something important is "no big deal," or they may say things like "that's all in your head" or "you're being dramatic."

If you are a victim of gaslighting, you might gradually feel confused about what is and isn't true. The first steps in getting out of a gaslighting situation are to recognize what is happening and remind yourself to trust your own feelings. This type of behavior is never acceptable and is never the victim's fault.



**SAY:** Great job! Next, we will see if we can figure out what to do when problems or conflicts come up in a relationship.



# SECTION 2

## Becoming Relationship Problem Solvers



### OBJECTIVES

- Youth will pose a question for the class to examine and resolve relating to a relationship conflict or a concern regarding a negative relationship behavior.
- Youth will determine whether the relationship scenarios their classmates submit are healthy or unhealthy.
- Youth will offer advice on how they might handle conflicts in the scenarios read to them.



### MATERIALS

- Notecards (if students will write and submit scenarios using paper and pencil method).
- **Relationship Challenges – Scenarios for Class Discussion** (download and use the three scenarios provided on this resource for Section 2, Part 2, if students do not provide sufficiently appropriate scenarios in Section 2, Part 1).



### KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Healthy relationships, unhealthy relationships, relationships in the media, pop culture



### TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

- Laptop or tablet device
- Projector or shared screen using videoconferencing platform such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Blackboard
- Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)
- Chalkboard or whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of problem-solving activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Slides, Zoom's whiteboard feature)
- Poll Everywhere free account (optional)

## PART 1 | Creating Student-Developed Scenarios (10 minutes)



**SAY:** Now that we've talked about some characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships, you're going to pretend you're asking an expert for advice on how to handle a situation where something difficult might have happened in a relationship. It could be something in a romantic relationship or any other kind of relationship—like with family members, friends, teachers, or coworkers. Your scenario can be a difficult or challenging everyday situation where young people might wonder if something is okay or not or might need advice about what to do. Or it can be something you've heard or read about on social media. Use realistic examples, but do not base scenarios on school events or any situation that may be recognized by the class. Use gender-neutral names, not names peers may recognize or other identifiable information.



### FACILITATOR TIP

Find real-world, pop culture examples of healthy and unhealthy relationships to increase youth engagement and help youth come up with their own scenarios. Change example names to gender-neutral names that fit your target audience. Add examples relevant to your target audience. If you do not have an example to share, you can use this example:



**SAY:** Here is an example of what I mean: Jamie and Logan had a fight, and when Jamie asked Logan for time and space to process the disagreement, Logan called Jamie's coworker and asked them to help plan a surprise for Jamie during a work event instead of giving the requested time and space. The coworker agreed, so they let Logan crash the work event. Logan came to the work event with balloons, a cake, and flowers and tried to apologize to Jamie for the fight. This was done in front of Jamie's coworkers, videotaped, and posted online.

Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following questions and observations, if needed:



**SAY:** Is what Logan did okay?



**ASK:** How would you feel if you were Jamie?

If students haven't suggested the following feelings, bring them up:

- Embarrassed—Jamie might feel like everyone is watching and may not know what to do. Jamie probably prefers to keep personal drama out of the workplace.
- Pressured—Jamie might feel the need to make a quick decision about whether to make up with Logan.
- Upset—Jamie might become emotional in front of her coworkers, or worry that the video was posted online.
- Disrespected—Jamie's wishes for time and space were not followed.
- Manipulated—Jamie may feel pressure to make up with Logan because everyone is watching.



**ASK:** Why might Logan have thought this was a good idea?

If students haven't suggested the following ideas, bring them up:

- Logan might consider the act to be thoughtful and generous.
- Logan might not understand why the act was manipulative.
- Logan might not be thinking about how Jamie might feel.
- Logan might not understand that this act disrespects Jamie's request for time and space.



**SAY:** Now let's pretend Jamie comes to you asking whether you think what Logan did was okay. What would you say to Jamie?



**SAY:** Now you will get into small groups and take about 10 minutes to come up with a scenario for each group. Then, we'll try to solve the challenges mentioned in a few of the scenarios as a class.

Divide students into enough small groups to ensure you collect at least three scenarios that can be used in Part 2 – Solving Relationship Challenges. Have students use a notecard (if in person), email, or Poll Everywhere to submit each group's scenario to you.

When this activity is completed, have the class take a 10-minute break so you can choose the scenarios you will use in Part 2 – Solving Relationship Challenges.



**FACILITATOR TIP**

Use Poll Everywhere as an optional brainstorming method to ask students to submit scenarios that depict relationship challenges.

See Before You start on page 2 for instructions.

**Break – 10 minutes**



# PART 2 | Solving Relationship Challenges (20 minutes)

## Class Discussion

**BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**  
RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES: SCENARIOS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

**Relationship Challenge #1 (Isolation)**

**Isolation:** I have been having issues with my new boyfriend. He's really into me, but doesn't like when I hang out with friends without him. He kind of thought if we had more he didn't know, but now he even gets annoyed when I hang out with people in our friend group. What should I do?

**FACILITATOR TIP**

- Students will come up with advice for Janis. Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following points, if needed.
  - It's important to listen to your instincts and not let your boyfriend keep you from being with friends or family.
  - Isolation:** Keeping you from others is an unhealthy behavior that can be easy to miss because it might seem like the other person is just with you. But this can be part of your boyfriend's attempt to control you.
  - If you feel like you're being pushed away from people you care about, share your concerns with your boyfriend in a healthy relationship, he will listen to you and change his behavior.
  - If you haven't, or if you feel uncomfortable talking with him about it, suggest asking an adult you trust for advice.

**Relationship Challenge #2 (Gaslighting)**

**Gaslighting:** I've been having a problem with a friend. Lately, she acts like she's right or something. When I'm talking to someone else, she tries to and correct me, which makes me feel bad about myself. I tried to talk with her about it, but she won't be being realistic. Am I being too self-conscious?

**FACILITATOR TIP**

- Students will come up with advice for Quinn. Supplement what the students say about this scenario with the following points, if needed.
  - It's not an effort to have conversations about things that she's with friends. When your friend says you're being ridiculous, she may be manipulating you so you start to doubt your own experiences and begin to feel like you're being too sensitive. That sort of manipulation is called "gaslighting."
  - Remember to trust yourself and know that your feelings are valid. If you feel uncomfortable, find a time to talk one-on-one with your friend and explain how her behavior makes you feel. But for you are thinking and listening you ask about the friendship.
  - If she continues to put you down after you've talked with her, it might be time to distance yourself from this relationship.

Guide students through a discussion of the scenarios they submitted in Section 2, Part 1. Have students describe what parts of each scenario are healthy and what parts are not. Ask students to brainstorm solutions to the challenges faced by the fictional characters in each scenario. Discuss as many scenarios as time allows. Read off the scenarios you think are most relevant, clearly written, and likely to generate helpful discussion. Use the **Relationship Challenges – Scenarios for Class Discussion** resource for this discussion if students have not provided sufficiently appropriate scenarios in Section 2, Part 1. Instruct students not to base scenarios on actual situations involving youth in the class or at the school.



**SAY:** Now we will consider some of the scenarios you all submitted. I will read each one off, and we will discuss what aspects of the scenario are healthy and what aspects are not.

Read the first scenario.



- ASK:**
- What about this relationship scenario makes it healthy or not?
  - How might you try to resolve the conflict in the scenario if you could?
  - What might you say to [character in scenario] if you could give them a piece of advice?

Read additional scenarios and ask the questions above as time allows.

## Wrap up the lesson



**SAY:** Great job! You've learned how to identify healthy and unhealthy behaviors in relationships, and you've learned how to solve some common problems and conflicts that can come up in relationships. These skills will help you have successful relationships with family, friends, romantic partners, and others.

Use your knowledge to make sure all your relationships are safe and healthy. You can help your friends too, by pointing out signs of unhealthy behaviors.

If you have concerns about a relationship you're in or if you have questions in general, talk with a parent or another adult you trust. If you need additional help, you can contact a trained peer advocate with [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org). All conversations by phone, chat, or text are free and confidential. This service was created especially for teens! I will share their contact information with you.

Share the **Contact Information Flyer for love is respect** with students (either by email or by printing out the flyer).

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